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ABSTRACT

Interrogation of Spanish speaking sources by English speaking interrogators continues to be a realistic scenario due to continued United States involvement in Central America. The use of bilingual interpreters, when applied correctly, enhances applied interpersonal communication in this cross-cultural context. Analysis of the interrogation situation evidences the need for interpersonal sensitivity by the interrogator. There are verbal and nonverbal communication elements which are central to a successful interrogation using an interpreter. A primary verbal concern deals with the approach used by the interpreter to convey interrogator statements. Nonverbal concerns deal with vocalic (tone of voice, inflection, and intent), proxemic (the physical arrangement of the three individuals), eye contact, and kinesic (body movements) considerations. The interpreter needs to serve as a bridge of understanding, verbally and nonverbally, between the interrogator and source. (MM)

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APPLIED INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT: THE USE OF INTERPRETERS AS AN INTERROGATION TECHNIQUE WHEN INTERVIEWING SPANISH SPEAKING INDIVIDUALS

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APPLIED INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT: THE USE OF INTERPRETERS AS AN INTERROGATION TECHNIQUE WHEN INTERVIEWING SPANISH SPEAKING INDIVIDUALS

The intelligence community of the United States military collects information in a variety of ways. This paper will focus on the collection of information from human sources. Specifically, sources who require the use of a spanish speaking interpreter. Application with spanish speaking sources is of particular concern due to U.S. involvement in Central America. However, the dynamics to be covered would be relevant with a source speaking any foreign language.

While the term interrogation sometimes conjures visions of physical coercion, this paper will deal with the process as applied interpersonal communication in a cross-cultural context (as approved by the Geneva Conventions). The primary source of information used in this paper is Field Manual 34-52, Intelligence Interrogation. It was published by the Department of the Army (May, 1987). Information presented is unclassified and is approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

The author is a Captain in the U.S. Air Force Intelligence Service (Reserve) and has completed the Basic Interrogation Course offered by the Department of the Army. He has also received additional interrogation training in Human Relations Intelligence (HUMINT) from the Air Force. It will be helpful to describe primary considerations in the interrogation process before addressing the specific use of an interpreter. This discussion will provide a relevant backdrop for interpreter use issues.

Interrogation is "the art of questioning and examining a source

to obtain the maximum amount of usable information." Sources may be civilian internees, insurgents, defectors, refugees, displaced persons, and agents or suspected agents. The goal of any interrogation is "to obtain usable and reliable information, in a lawful manner and in the least amount of time, which meets intelligence requirements of any echelon of command." The interrogation should produce information which is "timely, complete, clear, and accurate."[1]

There are five principles of interrogation: initiative, accuracy, prohibition against force, and security. These principles apply to any type of intelligence interrogation.

Each interrogation has a definite objective. This objective is based on the collection of information which will satisfy the intelligence needs of the supported unit's mission. The interrogation must regard this objective as primary. It will serve as a basis for planning and conducting the interrogation.

Initiative is emphasized as the interrogator must remain in charge throughout the interrogation. If the source is able to take control of the interrogation this can have a direct negative impact on the information gathering process.

The interrogator must show concern for obtaining accurate information from the source. A common procedure is to repeat questions at varying intervals. However, the interrogator should not try to act as an analyst. His/her primary mission is to collect information, but not evaluate it.

The use of force is prohibited at all times in the interrogation process. It is prohibited by law and is neither authorized nor condoned by the United States government. The use of force is also

inefficient as it can force the source to say whatever he/she thinks the interrogator wants to hear.

The interrogator must be aware of security issues relevant to his/her position. He/she works with a great deal of classified information and must be careful not to reveal such information to sources. He/she must also be sensitive to any attempts by sources to elicit information.

The aforementioned principles of interrogation provide general areas which the interrogator must be concerned with as he/she works to conduct a successful interrogation. Additionally, there are five primary interrogation phases which emphasize more specific detail regarding the collection of information: planning and preparation, approach, questioning, termination, and reporting.

The planning and preparation phase lays the groundwork for the interrogation process. Considerations in this procedure include the source's mental and physical condition, the source's background, the objective of the interrogation, and the interrelationship of source and interrogator personalities. The questioning of guards, for example, helps the interrogator learn about the source before meeting him/her face to face.

The approach phase is unique to each interrogation but all approaches share a number of common purposes. These include: establish and maintain control, establish and maintain rapport, and manipulation of the source's emotions and weaknesses to gain his/her willing cooperation. This phase is based on appropriate source assessment, smooth transitions, and recognition of source breaking point.

The questioning phase usually begins when the source starts to

answer questions relevant to specific interrogation objectives, although he/she may have already answered less pertinent questions. There are many areas of emphasis in this phase, such as the use of direct questions, appropriate follow-up questions, repeating questions to insure accuracy, and avoidance of ambiguous or leading questions. Map tracking (using a map to pinpoint specific locations and progressions) is helpful in insuring consistency, accuracy, and understanding in this phase.

The termination phase can be initiated for a variety of reasons, such as the source is uncooperative, all pertinent information has been obtained, time constraints, etc. This phase should be conducted without any loss of rapport since the source may be questioned again by the same interrogator or a different interrogator. He/she should be told his/her information will be checked for truthfulness and a final opportunity to change or add any information should be offered.

The final phase involves reporting information of intelligence value to the appropriate agency. Each military branch dictates the types of forms and procedures used in this phase. Regardless, reporting information should not be confused with evaluating information.

If the interrogator does not speak the source's language then an interpreter must be used. Thus, the interrogation process becomes applied interpersonal communication in a cross-cultural context involving a third party. The third party being fluent in the languages spoke by the interrogator and the source.

Interrogation of spanish speaking sources by english speaking interrogators, using bilingual (english-spanish) interpreters, continues to be a realistic scenario due to continued U.S. involvement in Central

America. Analysis of this interrogation situation evidences the need for interpersonal sensitivity by the interrogator.

Using an interpreter is a lengthy process since the interpreter must repeat everything said by the interrogator and the source. This requires considerable understanding between the interrogator and the interpreter.

There are verbal and nonverbal communication elements which are central to a successful interrogation using an interpreter. A primary verbal concern deals with the approach used by the interpreter to convey interrogator statements. Nonverbal concerns deals with vocalics, proxemics, occulesic, and kinesic considerations. The interpreter needs to serve as a bridge of understanding, verbally and nonverbally, between interrogator and source.

A fundamental tenet of this process dictates the source must understand the interrogator, not the interpreter, is in charge. This receives equal emphasis in the verbal and nonverbal areas.

There are two methods of interpretation: simultaneous and alternate. Using the simultaneous method, the interpreter listens and translates at the same time the interrogator speaks. Using the alternate method, the interpreter listens to an entire phrase (paragraph, etc.) and periodically translates during natural pauses. The simultaneous method should be used only if the sentence structure of the source language is parallel to english, the interpreter can easily imitate the interrogator's tone and attitude, and the interpreter is very fluent in both languages.

Vocalic considerations emphasize the interpreter needs to use interrogation content, tone of voice, inflection, and intent. He/she

should not inject any of his/her own personality or ideas.

Proxemic concerns focus on the physical arrangement of the three individuals. The preferred arrangement is to have the interrogater and source facing each other with the interpreter behind the source. This improves the interrogater's control as he/she can simultaneously interact with the source and interpreter. This also discourages the source from fixating on the interpreter as a person.

When the interrogater first meets with the source, the source should be instructed to maintain eye contact with the interrogater. Eye contact (occulesics) helps build a strong base of rapport between interrogater and source.

Kinesics deals with various types of body movements. Kinesics is especially important in situations when the source must look at the interpreter, such as map tracking for instance. During such times, the interpreter should imitate the kinesic behaviors of the interrogater as closely as possible. Otherwise, contradictory messages can be sent.

Prior to the interrogation, the interrogater should learn as much as possible about the nonverbal behavior norms of the source's home country. Knowledge of source nonverbal behaviors can become very important since nonverbal norms are uniquely grounded in each culture. Thus, the interrogater who is insensitive to source nonverbal norms may unknowingly send contradictory meanings.

Physical distance, body gestures, eye contact, pauses, and clothing, for instance, affect the nonverbal climate within which the interrogation takes place. Thus, the informed interrogater should be aware of proxemic, kinesic, occulesic, vocalic, and objectic norms

of the source's native country.

There are over twenty approaches which can be used when constructing the question sequence and desired interpersonal climate of the interrogation. Each approach dictates definite behaviors which must be communicated, verbally and nonverbally, by the interrogator (and through his/her interpreter).

The most common, and most successful approach, is called the "direct approach". Ironically, the direct approach is frequently referred to as no approach at all. It merely involves asking questions in a straight forward manner. Due to its effectiveness, and simplicity, the direct approach should be used first.

Beyond the direct approach, the approaches vary considerably in intensity and complexity. The variety of approaches are exemplified in some of the following descriptions.

The "incentive approach" involves rewarding the source for his/her cooperation. It is important to ensure the rewards serve to reinforce positive behavior.

The "emotional hate approach" focuses on the source's bitter feelings towards his/her superiors, fellow soldiers, unit or country. For example, this approach might be effective with a source who has been conscripted and forced into battle.

The "pride and ego down approach" is based on the interrogator attacking the source's sense of personal worth. For instance, questioning his/her ability as a soldier for letting him/herself be captured and how he/she might have negatively affected his/her unit and fellow soldiers.

The "file and dossier approach" is when the interrogator convinces

the source he/she already knows everything about the source and just needs to find out some minor details. This approach is based on strategic exaggeration and manipulation of what little information the interrogator might have about the source.

Again, there are a wide variety of approaches and the aforementioned exemplify some of the common approaches. Each approach dictates different emphasis on interpersonal communication variables.

The interrogation process is a very complicated form of interpersonal communication. The process is further complicated when the interrogator and source are from different countries and do not share common communication norms. The process becomes even more complicated when the interrogator and source do not speak the same language and a third party is introduced to interpret. Such a situation is exemplified today with continued U.S. involvement in Central America.

The use of bilingual (english-spanish) interpreters, when used correctly, definitely enhances applied interpersonal communication in this cross-cultural context. As a professor of interpersonal communication, the author feels study of such interaction is beneficial as it serves to ground interpersonal theory in concrete terms (causes and effects). This type of application enhances his teaching and research efforts. The examples discussed in this paper are especially unique due to the complexity of the interpersonal exchanges described.

Notes

1. Field Manual 34-52, Intelligence Interrogation. Department of the Army (May, 1987), p. 1-0.

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